

Gender and Biography

The lives of men and women, and male and female artists, are different—in expectations and in reality.

The biographies of male artists may mention marriage and even children, but usually only in passing. That information appears tangential to the “big” issues of where the artist lived, who they may have worked with and the art they produced. Of course, those same facts are important for all artists, no matter their gender.

But for women artists, those tangential experiences: marriage and children (or lack thereof), are crucial and especially so in the Early Modern Period, where expectations for the lives of women were largely prescribed.

Issues of family planning, through various “natural” methods, pregnancy, nursing, or use of a wet-nurse, employment of servants, childcare, and management of the household are integral to the biographies of women artists. Yet, these issues are seldom examined. They may appear as a distraction from the “bigger” issues, but for these women in their time, they were big issues.

Possible papers would concentrate on individual artists with these issues in mind, or on a topic such as birth-control, childcare, pregnancy, deaths in childbirth, wet-nurses, maids, household arrangements, and the impact of class on these and other decisions. This session can reveal more on the lives and life-styles of the artists we study.

Please submit your paper proposal of no more than 250 words, and a very brief CV to ffhofric@gmail.com by September 15th.

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